

Hello,

I would like to comment on the proposed rule for the use of locomotive horns. I live in Union City California and have heard locomotive horns at 3:45 am and was wondering whether or not horns at this time were necessary.

I am in favor of incorporating a horn restriction or ban in my city because the documentation supporting the ban in Florida and San Diego, appear valid.

I read the 147 page (wow!) Florida Train Whistle Ban document and had some difficulty with the statistics. All page references are to the Florida Train Whistle Ban document. Note that the page references are to the actual page typed on the report, not the acrobat reader (. pdf) page designation.

### **International Studies**

No study was listing a study of the extensive British Rail system. In Britain, the level crossings also have audible warnings. The trains sound only around corners and tunnels. No audible warnings at the level crossings, as an alternative to the train whistle, is developed in detail.

### **Sound Characteristics**

The decibel level is never quantified. Only the requirement that a train sound its horn “within 1500 feet of a public railroad-highway grade crossing shall emit a signal audible for such distance” (page 16). That is more than a ¼ of a mile away. It is not necessarily better to simply stop the train whistle, but to instead put it at the intersection.

In addition to the decibel level, it is the horn’s Doppler effect, which is annoying. A moving train causes a horn’s sound to drop as it goes by a previously sleeping person. The person in the car hears an approaching as a level tone until it passes. The British horns on the level crossings warble, just like sirens. A warbling tone is easier to distinguish than a monotone horn.

The opinion in the Oregon Report (p. 67) showed that “factors such as train volume, traffic volume, and the type of crossing protection devices have a greater relationship to safety than does the sounding of the whistle.”

Since it is cheaper to put one horn on a train and continually honk it rather than have an audible warning at every level crossing, safety may indeed be being compromised for cost.

### **The Human Factor**

A person in a car might not equate a whistle at ¼ mile away with a crossing he cannot yet see. However, a horn at the crossing, with enough of an audible signal to cause a car to stop at the car’s stopping distance, may be more prudent.

People might have developed a dangerous Pavlovian response to the train track crossing process. People may have been trained that when a) the crossing guard goes down, b) the lights flash AND c) a horn honks, a locomotive is coming. If one of these parameters suddenly is not there, it may be mistakenly assumed that a locomotive is not coming. The data on page 44 suggests that 96 people drove around or through the gate because they didn’t hear a whistle. No whistle. No Train. Bad assumption.

How many crossings have failed that people began to believe that it was the horn, and only the horn that signaled the approach of a train?

The statistics showed that 115-117 people were in accidents after the 10pm – 6am whistle ban took effect (page 8, 44). However, there are no statistics on the mental and physical capabilities of these people. Who were these people?

It is well known that Florida has a larger percentage of elderly people and that statistically an elderly person's capabilities are diminished.

There are no hour-by-hour statistics of each accident. It is well known that at 2 am the bars close. Were the accidents caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs?

Thank you,

Michael Licata